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SIKHISM AND THE SIKHS.

BY SIR LEPEL GRIFFIN, K. C. S. I.

SIKHISM, the creed of the brave and hardy race that held dominion over the plain country of the Punjab during the first fifty years of the present century, and disputed the sovereignty of Northern India with the English, well deserves the study of those interested in the birth and development of religions. Like some other creeds, it had its origin in a profound dissatisfaction with the existing order of things, and a passionate endeavor on the part of its founder to break the chain which Brâhmanism had fastened round the feet and hands of every Hindu. Later, under the wholesale stimulus of persecution, it became a fierce and inspiring belief, which changed a nation of peaceful peasants into an army of disciplined warriors, who, guided by a leader of genius, were the most formidable armed force that native India had seen since the days of Aurung-Zeb and Shâh Jehan. The revolt of Sikhism against Brâhmanism resembled that of Protestantism against the Church of Rome, in that it was not a contradiction of dogma, but a resistance to the intolerable pretensions of the priestly class. The doctrines of Luther differed in but few and unimportant particulars from those of the orthodox champions of Catholicism. The theological tangle known as Brâhmanism would have included the doctrinal subtleties and puerilities of Nânak without difficulty. It was itself a compound of mysticism and realism, tolerant and all-embracing—theistic, polytheistic and pantheistic at the same time. It allowed to the ignorant worshipper a myriad gods, from the ochre-stained stone in the forest to the awful personages of the Hindu Trinity; while to the elect, who had risen beyond symbolism to the purer air, it provided conceptions of the Deity as noble and exalted as those to be found in any religion of East or West. But no creed, however lofty in

conception or ethically worthy, is tolerable to free and liberal minds in which the power of interpretation and direction is jealously guarded, as a hereditary right, by a corrupt and prejudiced priesthood. It was against this pretension that the reformers of the West and the East took up arms; and it is a strange coincidence that the teaching of both Luther and Nânak was synchronous, and that they were born and died within a few years of each other.

In this paper all that can be attempted is to show, generally, the line of doctrine expounded by Nânak and his eight successors in the office of Guru or spiritual leader; secondly, to note the important changes introduced by Govind Singh, the tenth Guru and founder of the Church Militant of Sikhism; and, lastly, to observe the practice of the Sikhs of to-day, and the degree in which they have fallen away from the teaching of both Nânak and Govind and reverted to Hindu ceremonial and modes of thought.

When Nânak, who was born in 1469, began his teaching, Hinduism had long crystallized into the sacerdotal guild which we see in India to-day. It may even be said that its religious aspect was then more lost than now in a multitude of ceremonial observances and social prescriptions; for the influence of missionary and proselyting creeds, like Christianity and Islam, has been to draw out what is best in Hinduism and encourage cultivated Hindus to reject the material and grosser part of their creed in favor of its higher esoteric teaching. But then, as now, for the uninstructed mass of the people, Brâhmanism was Hinduism—that is to say, doctrine counted for little or nothing, and the strict observance of the rules of Caste, with the Brâhman as the top-stone of the social pyramid, was everything. Caste had been invented by Brâhmans for Brâhmans; a system by which Hindu society was divided and subdivided by hereditary and impregnable barriers, the Brâhmans remaining a sacred priesthood, immeasurably above all others, directing the lives and conduct of all, and without toll to whom none of the ordinary functions of civil life could be effectively performed. The greedy Brâhman demanded his fees at birth and marriage and death, and to feed Brâhmans was a virtue far above devotion to mercy, truth and justice. It was against this privileged hierarchy that Nânak directed his attack; and, although he did not preach the abolition of Caste as was subsequently done by Govind Singh, his writings are filled

with acknowledgments of the brotherhood and equality of man, and he admitted all classes as his disciples. Nor did his gentle and quietist nature attempt a direct assault on the Brâhman class, other than by the denunciation of the idol worship on the profits of which they lived. He even allowed and approved the use of Brâhmans as private and domestic priests, to perform such ceremonial as was unobjectionable; though he rejected their teachings, together with the doctrine of Vedas and Purânas, the Hindu sacred books. Born in the Punjab, where the conflict between Hinduism and Islam had long continued, he was doubtless influenced, as had been the *Bhagats* or pious teachers who had preceded him, by the central idea of Mohammedanism, the unity of God; and monotheism was the cardinal truth of his doctrine.

It is necessary to study carefully his Gospel, known as the Adi Granth, to realize adequately the purity and beauty of Nânak's doctrine. This enormous volume is somewhat repellent to Western scholars. The only form in which it is accessible—for the Gûrmukhi in which it is written is exceedingly obscure—is the translation of Dr. Ernest Trumpp, a learned German professor, who was brought to Lahore at a time when I was Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government to undertake this difficult task, on which he spent seven years' labor. But his command of English was not equal to a rendering of the spirit of the original, and he further appears to have considered the Granth as an incoherent and shallow production, and its chief value to be linguistic, as a treasury of the mediæval Hindu dialects. This judgment appears to me to be mistaken. There are, it is true, many puerilities and vain repetitions from which the books of no Eastern religion are free; but it is scarcely possible to turn a single page without being struck by the beauty and originality of the images and the enlightened devotion of its language. No Catholic ascetic has ever been more absorbed in the contemplation of the Deity than was the prophet Nânak when giving utterance to his rhapsodies.

The monotheism of Nânak is often not to be distinguished from Pantheism; and, unless a creed be provided with a personal and anthropomorphic deity, it is always difficult to draw the line between the two. Sometimes Nânak represents God as a self-conscious spirit protecting the creatures He has made; an ever-present Providence, Who can be approached through the Guru, the heaven-appointed teacher, and ready to bless and emancipate

the soul which worships sincerely and humbly. At other times, man and the universe and all that exists are but a part of and an emanation from God, Who produces all things out of Himself and to Whom all finally return. In the same way, it would seem that Nânak in no way denied the existence of the lower deities of the Hindu mythology; for the poetic pantheism on which his belief in the one supreme God was based could hardly exist without the symbolism which inspired all nature with life, and found a spiritual force behind and within every manifestation of natural energy. Yet all such deities he asserted to be indifferent and unworthy of regard, much as the early preachers of Christianity treated the gods of Greece and Rome, in whose existence they believed, but whose dominion was to be overthrown by Christ. Idolatry he condemned, and the service pleasing to the Deity was that of the heart; neither vain ceremonies nor the austerities which the Hindu ascetics had been wont to consider as the key which unlocked the highest and most secret mysteries, but a pure, unselfish life, a faith in God revealed through the instrumentality of the appointed Guru or spiritual guide. Charity and good works were commendable and the worthy fruits of an unselfish life; but they were not of themselves sufficient to release the soul from its bondage to sense and illusion, or to save it from transmigration, the ever-present dread of the Hindu, or to insure its reunion with God. These results could only be attained by meditation on God and through the saving grace of His name.

Although Nânak claimed to be a prophet, he did not assert that he was inspired or possessed of miraculous powers, though these were freely ascribed to him by his disciples, both during his lifetime and after his death. But he magnified his office of Guru into that of an intermediary between man and God, and blind obedience to the Guru was enjoined as an essential article of faith. The Guru's saving power was such that contact with him brought salvation to the most criminal. In short, the virtue of the Guru was supreme; and, although Nânak himself claimed no special sanctity, but spoke of himself as an ignorant and sinful man, yet the Gurus who succeeded him and who possessed more ambition and less piety, were virtually deified by their followers; and the worship of the Guru and the surrender to him of the wealth, the honor and the life of his followers, became as grievous a burden to the Sikh community as the yoke of the Brâhmans had been.

The doctrine of transmigration of souls was common to Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism—the belief in the continued existence of the soul, through countless changes into various forms of animal and human existences, until by the virtue of the Guru and the saving power of the name of God, final emancipation was attained and absorption into the Supreme, when individuality ended. This practical annihilation, which the loss of individuality signifies to the less subtle fancy of Europeans, was the chief object of the religious strivings of the Sikh or Hindu, and it was the reward of virtue and of faith in God. It was thus from a different standpoint that life and death were regarded by Eastern and Western thinkers. To the former life is a burden from which the soul should seek release in forgetfulness and darkness; to the latter, the idea of a happy immortality, as the reward for a virtuous earthly life, is the one thought which permits life to be borne with cheerfulness, and death faced with equanimity. But the troubles and enigmas which have confused and perplexed many Christian communities found their exact counterpart in Sikhism. There was the same conflict between predestination, election and free will. The sacred name was only communicated by the Guru to those upon whose forehead had been imprinted, from the beginning, the sign which designated him as one of the elect. Destiny was absolute and supreme. Man was represented as a puppet, whom the Master made to dance as it pleased Him. In every breast, goodness, passion or darkness was predominant, and human actions were necessarily the result of the influence that swayed them. Illusion had been spread around all earthly things; man was deceived by a Power above and without him; and he was irresponsible, seeing that the impulse of his conduct was beyond his control. It was hopeless to attempt to reconcile the doctrines of predestination and free will, the choice of good or evil, and a system of rewards and punishments, with the fixed decree of an unchanging destiny; and the attempt was probably made in order to account for the inequalities, the sorrow and suffering of human life, the perplexity of which had lain at the root of the Hindu doctrine of the transmigration of souls.

It is not possible here to discuss the dogmas of Sikhism as expounded by Nânak in more detail. He was a true prophet, and accomplished worthily an exalted mission. His system, like all systems, had many imperfections; and chief of them were those

which equally belonged to Calvinism, in the substitution of one tyranny for another, and the overshadowing of all human joy by a predestined lot which no faith or virtue could modify. But the good far outweighed the evil. Nânak taught the wisdom and omnipotence of one Supreme God, and the equality of all men, of whatever race or creed, in His sight; purity of life, charity, humility, and temperance. He enjoined kindness to animals, and forbade both female infanticide and the burning of widows. He condemned idolatry and asceticism, and preached the wholesome doctrine that the state of the worker and householder was the most honorable condition, and that, to find God and serve Him, it was not necessary to practice austerities or retire from active life. His object, in which he largely succeeded, was to purge Hinduism of the dross which had gathered about it; to lift it from the slough of polytheism and vain ceremonial in which it was choked, and to bring it back to the firm ground and the pure air of the Vedas. His mission, at the close of the fifteenth century, was the same as that of Raja Lâl Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandar Sen in the nineteenth; but his originality was the greater, for his impulse was not, like theirs, the necessary result of contact with European culture and modes of thought, which are largely and beneficially affecting Hinduism. The missionary teaching of Christianity affects educated Hindus little if at all; but the science and literature of the West are playing an important part in purifying Hinduism of its materialism, and bringing it back to its ancient monotheism, or to that state of suspension of judgment which is somewhat inadequately designated agnosticism.

The successors of Nânak, who held the Guruship from 1538 to 1675 A. D., were of far inferior capacity and disinterestedness, and do not require much mention. It was the fourth Guru, Râm Dâs, who founded the famous city of Amritsar, and built the Golden Temple in the middle of the Tank of Nectar, thus giving to the Sikh people a centre for worship; while Arjan, the fifth Guru, systematized the theocracy, collected taxes and assumed something of the state of a secular ruler. His death was due to the tyranny of the Mohammedan Government, which then, from its capital of Delhi, ruled the greater part of the Indian peninsula; and from that date, 1606 A. D., commenced an obstinate quarrel between Sikhs and Mohammedans, which continued until, in the general crush of the Mogul Empire, at the

beginning of the present century, the former seized supreme power in the Punjab. Nor is the hostility between them at an end at the present day, and the Sikh warriors, in 1857, followed the call of the English to Delhi and Lucknow, to avenge their slaughtered prophets and co-religionists of days long past. The stern measures of repression which the Moslem Governors employed against the Sikhs were in some measure justified by the turbulent character of these sectaries who lived by plunder and levied contributions upon all who were not of their persuasion. But the fierceness of their hatred to Mohammedanism and its steady flame were due to the religious bigotry of the Emperor Aurung-Zeb, who considered it a sacred duty to destroy all who would not accept Islâm, and whose savage fanaticism hastened the decay of the Mogul power. No creed endures the foundation stones of which have not been cemented with blood; and the persecutions of Aurung-Zeb only united the Sikhs more closely in resistance to his rule, until at last a man arose among them who possessed spiritual authority and organizing power, and who changed the whole complexion of the Sikh creed. This was Govind Singh, the tenth and last Guru, who, on the martyrdom of his father, became leader of the sect till his death in 1708. The changes introduced by Govind, though fundamental, were not doctrinal. He was, indeed, no quietist like Nânak, but a man of action, animated by the passion of revenge. The monotheistic theory he did not dispute; but his patron saint, so to speak, was the fierce goddess Dûrga, to whom he is said to have offered a human sacrifice to inaugurate his mission. He formed the Sikhs into a military brotherhood under the name of the Khâlsâ. He abolished caste altogether, which Nânak had never ventured to do; and, although this offended many of the better classes, it was received with enthusiasm by the lower orders who flocked to his standard. He instituted an initiatory rite of baptism, known as the *pâhul*, a feast of communion, and a distinctive dress to distinguish his disciples from other Hindus. Sikhs were forbidden to cut their hair or beard, to gamble or to smoke tobacco; but intoxicating liquors were allowed, and the richer classes have always been hard drinkers, though the peasants are temperate enough. No regard was to be paid to Vedas, Shâstras or the Korân, neither to Hindu priests or Mohammedan mullahs; visits to temples and shrines and the observance of Hindu ceremonies

at birth, marriage and death were alike forbidden. The mild law of Nânak was transformed into a gospel of intolerance and hate, directed not only against his bitter enemies, the Mohammedans, but against the members of all alien creeds and non-conforming Sikh sects, of which several had arisen. But the Mohammedans were the chief objects of Sikh hatred. To salute one of the accursed race was a crime worthy of hell, and the life-long duty of the Sikh was to slay Mohammedans and wage constant war upon them. The results of this teaching and practice turned the Punjâb, for a hundred years, into an arena of bloodshed. Mohammedan conquerors from Central Asia and Afghânistân swooped down upon the dying Mogul empire, and occupied the northern capital, Lahore, and established Viceroys and Governors. But, with varying fortunes, the conflict with the Sikhs always continued, until it was finally decided by the gradual conquest of the Punjab by Mâharâja Runjit Singh.

Of all the men who carved principalities out of the inheritance of the Emperors of Delhi, the most remarkable was Runjit Singh. He possessed the genius both of war and of government. The son of the chief of one of the smaller Sikh military confederacies, he attacked and overcame all rivals and competitors of his own faith, and then turned his sword against the Mohammedans, annexing in turn the Afghân provinces of Multân, Kashmîr, Peshâwur and the Derajât, which is the name of the long strip of plain country that lies between the Indus and the mountains on the northwestern frontier of Hindostan. In the Afghâns he met an enemy equal to the Sikhs in bravery and fanaticism; the contest was for many years undecided, and cost the Mâharâja heavily, both in men and treasure. But the discipline and arms of the Sikhs gave Runjit Singh the final advantage; and, at his death in 1839, he was the undisputed ruler of the Punjâb and Kashmîr.

Those who care to know in more detail my estimate of Runjit Singh, his character, his mode of government, his counsellors, his army and his conquests, may find it in his biography, which I wrote in 1892, for the University of Oxford. There is only space here to note the influence of his reign on the religious side of Sikhism. This was partly good and partly evil. The fierce intolerance of Govind Singh was abandoned by the Mâharâja for an absolute indifference to religion, further than was necessary to retain the allegiance of the Sikhs and secure the personal

adherence of their religious guides, Bábás and Bhais, whom he largely subsidized and treated with every outward mark of respect. But in his eyes the creed of his servants mattered nothing, so long as they served him well. Several of his most trusted and capable Ministers were Mohammedans, and many were Brâhmans, whose employment Govind Singh had distinctly forbidden. The Sikhs, chiefs and people, were plain soldiers, utterly illiterate; and no place could be found for them in a system of government so complicated as that of the Mâharâja, where Brâhmans and Mohammedans of education, experienced through long generations in all the arts of government, were necessary to the maintenance of his position. Even in the army, the same spirit of tolerance was found. Diwân Mokham Chand, a Khattri Hindu, was probably his best general; and Irish, Italian and French officers trained and led important divisions of his forces.

This tolerance in matters of religious belief removed the darkest blot from the ferocious creed of Govind, and allowed the Sikhs to enter the community of reasonable and civilized men; for, during the eighteenth century, their hand was against every man, and plunder and slaughter were the law of their being. This reform, selfish though it was in its origin, so modified and elevated the Sikh polity and character that its advantage far outweighed the injury to public decency and morality which may have resulted from the violent and treacherous character of the monarch or the drunkenness and profligacy of his life. Morality is conventional, and conduct must be judged by the standard of the age and the environment of the individual. Mâharâja Runjit Singh, in spite of his faults, was a really great monarch, and, like Peter the Great of Russia, who was far more coarse and cruel, he created a State and a nation. The ignorant and brutal Sikh peasants became, by the inspiration of his genius, the most formidable armed force that India had seen during the nineteenth century. Every adult male was a soldier; and, if the religious fervor was not so keen as in the days of Govind Singh, a strong national spirit, almost unknown in India before, had succeeded and supplemented it. Had the great Mâharâja lived in other days, the warlike Sikhs, with such a leader and inspired by so high a spirit, might well have founded an empire co-extensive with that of the Moguls. But the time was inauspicious; the Mâ-

harâja died prematurely, exhausted by excesses, and the kingdom which he had so laboriously built up collapsed.

It was but a short time after his death, in 1839, that the folly and weakness of his successors brought about a collision with the British Power, which, in a hundred years, with the irresistible force and sureness of a rising tide, had spread over Hindostân from Calcutta to the river Sutlej, and in whose advance the Mâharâja had clearly foreseen and predicted the overthrow of the Sikh monarchy. During his lifetime he had anxiously and consistently maintained friendship with England, and though at times his ambitious schemes led to friction and complaint, yet the loyal determination of the two Governments to preserve peace was effectual. But at his death, the powerful army he had perfected, trained and placed under the command of French and Italian generals of repute, restrained no longer by fear and loyalty, broke into mutiny, seized the supreme power in the state, and at last crossed the frontier and declared war against the British Government. The campaign which followed was exceptionally severe and bloody. Never before in India had the English met an enemy so formidable—a disciplined army with weapons equal to their own, and an artillery more numerous and powerful. After a series of hotly contested battles, in which more than once victory was perilously near defeat, the English entered Lahore in triumph, and commenced the experiment, always doubtful and dangerous in the East, of a puppet monarch and a necessarily ineffective control. This sure receipt for disaffection and intrigue brought about a fresh revolt of the Sikh army, which had no desire to beat its swords into ploughshares before it had made another trial of strength with the English. The ensuing campaign, as severe as but briefer than the first, was decisive, and the whole of the Punjab was annexed to the British Dominions in 1849. The Sikhs, like gallant soldiers, accepted the inevitable without bitterness. Their national sentiment was not outraged by the result of a contest in which they had honorably striven, on almost equal terms, with the Power which had successively overthrown all the great military organizations of Hindostân, and which was careful to allow them as free and full expression of Sikh teaching and practice as the Mâharâja himself; which willingly enrolled their disbanded soldiers in its own armies, and renewed and confirmed the endowments of their beloved religion. From that day to this, the

Sikhs have shown themselves the most loyal and devoted subjects of the Queen. When the Bengal army, in 1857, was driven into mutiny by the crass stupidity and criminal carelessness of the military authorities, the Sikh Mâharâjas, chiefs and people, sprang again to arms, and fought with the utmost gallantry by the side of the British, whom they had learned to respect.

Fifty years have passed since the annexation of the Punjab, and it will be interesting to know what kind of men are the Sikhs of to-day; how far civilization and education and orderly government have affected or modified their characteristics, and how the later phase of their religion, as taught by Govind Singh, has fared in the uncongenial atmosphere of peace. I have long lived among the Sikhs, and was Chief Magistrate of their principal districts of Lahore and Amritsar; and during several years I was officially employed in writing the histories of the independent chiefs and nobles of the Punjab. Indeed, at one time, there was scarcely a single Sikh of position with whom I was not personally acquainted. My experience is that no one can live in intimate relations with the Sikh people, chiefs or peasants, with any other feeling than confidence, respect and affection. They are a singularly sincere, simple and warm-hearted race, susceptible to kindness and giving a most loyal service to those whom they trust. This description applies not to Sikhs alone, but to the great agricultural tribe of Jats, from which the Sikhs were mostly drawn, and in which they are often re-absorbed. The Jats are the most important people in the Punjab, and are widely spread from Delhi to the Indus. Nearly connected with the Râjpûts in origin, they have many characteristics which separate them from that noble stock, for they are almost universally employed in agriculture, which the Râjpûts, as a rule, dislike or despise. But the Jats are the backbone of the revenue-paying population, peaceful, when not excited by fanaticism or oppression, self-restrained, sober, industrious and independent. Their love of freedom and independence is their most striking characteristic, giving them an open and manly frankness which invites the sympathy of Englishmen with whom they have so much in common.

The value of the Sikhs as soldiers has an important bearing on the future of the British Empire in the East, not in India alone, but in all other regions in which native troops can be profitably employed; and it is an interesting question to determine

how far the modern conditions of the Punjab affect the military qualities of the Sikhs and the adherence of new disciples to the Sikh creed. For it must be remembered that Sikhism is a matter of profession and election, not of hereditary necessity, like the caste system of Brâhmanism. The baptism of initiation is not ordinarily administered to the sons of a Sikh until they are adult, never before the age of seven years, while to women, except in rare cases, it is not given at all. It will be obvious that there no longer exist the same strong impulse and attraction to Sikhism as in the time of Govind Singh, or still more during the reign of Runjit Singh, when every Sikh was a favored member of a dominant class. The change of tendency was very marked in the first census taken in the Punjab after annexation, when the number of recorded Sikhs was small; though too great stress should not be laid on statistics at such a time, when concealment of creed may have been due to doubt as to the treatment the Sikhs would receive from their new rulers. When it was found that the British bore no animosity toward them, and that, on the contrary, they were anxious to utilize so admirable a fighting race, the numbers who presented themselves for initiation rapidly increased; and, in the five districts where Sikhs most abound, the numbers recorded in 1868 and 1881 were three times as great as in the first census. Other causes assisted to stimulate the religious impulse. The Indian mutiny, during which all Sikh recruits were welcomed to the British army, gave an impetus to the creed, and the *Pax Britannica* which has been observed for so many years within the borders of Hindostân has not prevented the Sikhs from enjoying plenty of fighting in other parts of the world. In Afghânistân and on the North-West Frontier, in China and the Soudan, the Sikhs have always been in the van and have covered themselves with glory; while in Burmah, Singapore and Hongkong they form an admirable body of military police. Among the fighting races of the world, the Sikh holds a very high place, nor do I believe that for the highest qualities of a soldier there is any one his superior. Led by British officers, I believe Sikhs to be far better troops, steadier and more intelligent, than the majority of those found in European armies. The Gûrkhas are equally good, but of these the number of recruits is limited. The value of the Sikh is increased by his freedom from caste prejudice, which permits his employment beyond the sea or in conditions where

the Brâhman, the Râjpût or the ordinary Hindu would find it impossible to live without incurring social ostracism. The Sikh is as gallant and impetuous in attack as he is imperturbable in defense or reverse. Exceedingly temperate and enduring, the severest hardships are borne cheerfully and without complaint, and he is always ready to risk or sacrifice his life, without a thought, when led by officers who are worthy of him. No praise which can be given to this incomparable soldier is above his deserts. At the same time, it must not be supposed that the Sikhs collectively are such a fighting race as in the days of the great Mâharâja. Soon after annexation, the Punjab was disarmed in the interests of public order, and the men who had been accustomed to redress their own wrongs with the sword which hung ever at their side were compelled to carry their complaints to the courts of law, and to find in the discipline of the regular army the only safety-valve for their martial enthusiasm. So it happened that a very large number of the Sikhs, peasants and landholders, gave up their fighting habits, and became again peaceful agriculturists, one or two members of the family taking the *pâhul* and joining the army, with the warlike affix of Singh to their name, the others remaining Hindus and not to be distinguished by dress or mode of life from their Jat kinsmen, among whom they lived. But the Sikh fighting quality has in no way deteriorated, although the available quantity has become less.

The religious ardor of the Sikhs, under the discipline of the regular army and the orderly progress of civil life, has become an almost burthensome encumbrance and in no way enhances their value as soldiers. Its decline is only to be regretted in that it diminishes the number of recruits to the military caste, for the Hindu Jat peasant, although equally staunch with the Sikh, has not the same inclination to warlike pursuits and prefers to cultivate his ancestral fields. Day by day, the new faith of Govind loses its hold over the people, and the old creed of Hinduism, with its Brâhmanical sacerdotalism and its worship of strange gods, is taking its place. The Sikh still, from time to time, visits the temple to listen to the reading of the Granth; he abstains from tobacco and leaves his hair and beard unshorn, while his observance of caste restrictions is lax, and he is content to take food from even the hands of a Mohammedan. But the Brâhman has now again become an object of reverence and is called to officiate

at births and marriages; the men, and especially the women, always most superstitious and most ready to accept priestly control, visit the idol temples and local shrines; and, in those districts of the Punjab most distant from the religious centre, there is little to distinguish the Sikh of to-day from the ordinary Hindu. This laxity in faith gave rise, some thirty years ago, to a movement which caused some anxiety to the Government, when a carpenter, named Ram Singh, founded a new sect, the Kûkas, and attempted to draw his co-religionists back into the path of orthodoxy. He preached Govind Singh as the only true Guru, and insisted upon the abolition of caste, abstinence from animal food, tobacco and intoxicating liquors, free intermarriage and the neglect of Hindu priests and temples with all their idolatrous symbolism. So long as the Kûka teaching only aimed at religious reform, the Government did not interfere, although respectable citizens were scandalized at the debauchery which prevailed in the Kûka mixed assemblies. But when, like Govind Singh, they changed religion into a political propaganda, proclaimed the restoration of the Khâlsâ and the overthrow of the British Government, and proceeded to insurrection and murder, the sect was suppressed with a heavy hand; the leaders, arrested in one night throughout the province, were deported to Burmah, Aden and the Andamans, and the Kûka revival, after a short time, was heard of no more. But, although religious fanaticism always contains the germs of possible danger, it is a matter of regret that Sikhism, which, as taught by its first prophet Nânak, was so full of promise, and was inspired by a pure morality and a high conception of the Deity, should fall back again into the idolatrous materialism from which for a time he had raised it. But the recuperative and absorbing power of Brâhmanism is very great. History records how it overthrew and expelled the creed of Buddhism from Hindostân, and it seems about to repeat the process with Sikhism.

For the British Government of India it is desirable, so far as may be practicable, to stimulate and encourage the life and growth of a martial spirit in the fighting races of India. They form an invaluable reserve of military power, which may be counted upon with confidence so long as the administration is popular and commends itself to the conscience of the people as just and beneficent. But it is difficult to take any steps which might seem to favor a sentiment so closely interwoven with re-

ligious principle and practice, when the declared basis of British policy is a strict religious neutrality. This has not, it is true, prevented the continuance of ancient endowments to the temples and shrines of the Sikh, Hindu and Mohammedan religions; but the tendency has been to reduce and terminate these wherever possible, and to withdraw from the state the management of all religious institutions. The endowments of the Golden Temple at Amritsar are now but scanty, and it has lost in great part the rich offerings which were made freely by Râjas and Mâharâjas when they paid their annual visits to the shrine around which their Bungas or hostels still stand. The policy of the old East India Company was more sympathetic and encouraged the endowment of the several religions of India—a practice to be logically defended on the ground that the people who paid the taxes and furnished the state revenue should have a portion thereof devoted to the maintenance of the public worship of the national creeds, such as Brâhmanism, Mohammedanism and Sikhism. But, as the tendency of higher statesmanship grows more agnostic, the less does it seem able or disposed to oppose the pressure of an aggressive proselytizing spirit, which seems to grow in fervor with the absence of resistance; which has caused serious evil in China, which threatens trouble in the Soudan, and which will be the cause of future danger throughout the Eastern World. There can be little doubt that a purely secular education is, for the great mass of the people, inconsistent with the highest realization of the duties of citizenship, and that ethical teaching cannot be altogether divorced from religious sanctions. All the scientific and philosophical religions have a satisfactory ethical basis, and a Government like that of India, which professes to evenly hold the balance between competing creeds, and which has solemnly promised to abstain from pressing Christianity upon its Indian subjects, should endeavor, by the liberal, judicious and impartial endowment of all religions accepted by large sections of the community, to conciliate the priestly class, which now stands aloof, unfriendly or hostile, and thus promote not only loyalty to the ruling power, but the growth of a higher morality which finds no sufficient sustenance in the dry and barren teaching of Western literature and science.

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